

Tell Your Story: Guidelines for Preparing an Evaluation Report

Rationale for the Evaluation Report

Local program contractors are to conduct evaluation activities that assess the effectiveness of their local tobacco control efforts and to submit an Evaluation Report that clearly shows their findings. By knowing what's working and what's not working, for whom and in what context, and by understanding the relative effectiveness of various approaches, we improve our efforts to change norms toward a tobacco-free California. Evaluating, for example, the benefit of community education, media advocacy, policy training, and mini-grants ensures optimal utilization of the California tobacco tax revenue, provides the information needed to create, enhance, and modify tobacco control activities, and demonstrates which tobacco control efforts are most valuable for replication.

Abstracts and other information from Evaluation Reports will be catalogued into the Local Program Evaluation database. The full reports will be housed in a Tobacco Control Section (TCS) library collection. This will facilitate compilation and dissemination of the tobacco control experience in California. As a result, local tobacco control programs, interested community members and public health practitioners from California, other states and other countries can learn about California's local tobacco control efforts. Some findings may influence legislation and provide data for legislative analyses, program reports, and other accounts provided to the Governor, State legislature or federal agencies.

These guidelines for writing an Evaluation Report were prepared in response to requests from local contractors, and they are offered in that spirit. TCS understands that reports may deviate from these guidelines.

Guidelines for Writing an Evaluation Report

When is the Evaluation Report Submitted?

Upon completion of the project, local program evaluators or project staff designated as evaluators summarize results of evaluation activities by preparing an Evaluation Report to satisfy the terms described in the work plan. The Evaluation Report may be submitted to TCS in an interim progress report or as part of the final comprehensive report, whichever is closer to completion of the evaluation. If you have questions, contact the Health Education Consultant or Health Program Adviser assigned to your contract.

Since most reports contain a mixture of qualitative (text-based) and quantitative (number-based) data, it is unnecessary to characterize any report as being either quantitative or qualitative.

Some General Guidelines for Writing the Evaluation Report:

1. Write the report for the general reader who may be unfamiliar with general issues in tobacco control or the project setting or community.
2. Link the evaluation results to the outcome objective.
3. Avoid total reliance on a narrative. For example, use graphs, figures, illustrations, and tables to display key data.
4. Review the proposed conclusions with management and agency staff before finalizing the Evaluation Report. Discussing results and conclusions improves the validity and accuracy of the report and may help resolve opinion differences.
5. Be honest. Most evaluations yield a mix of positive and negative findings that should be presented in a balanced manner. Negative as well as positive findings guide future endeavors.
6. Report results in reader-friendly, concise, straightforward language. Describe what was evaluated, why it was evaluated, results and implications, as well as lessons learned. Keep in mind that there is often more than one way to interpret the results of a project.

Sections for the Evaluation Report

Include the following items, if relevant, in your report and attach the Evaluation Report Checklist (see last page) to the front cover.

I. Cover or Title Page:

- Title of study
- Period of time covered in report
- Name of project director
- Current agency address and telephone number (fax and e-mail numbers, if possible)
- Name of Evaluation Report authors
- TCS Contract Number
- Proposition 99 attribution

II. Acknowledgment Page (optional)

You may want to list the names, affiliations, and tasks of persons and agencies that contributed to the report. Acknowledgment is one way to thank contributors for their dedication, attention to detail and hard work. This page provides proof of participation (i.e., for resumes) and encourages future support. In addition, acknowledgments have historic value.

III. Abstract or Summary of the Final Evaluation Report

Keep the abstract to a minimum of one paragraph and a maximum of one page. The abstract should stand alone, providing an overview of the entire Evaluation Report, reasons for the study, major conclusions and recommendations. The following should be in the abstract:

- Major purpose of the project and its evaluation
- Program Description
 - Setting
 - Project Activities
 - Target Group
- Evaluation Methods
 - Study design
 - Sample
 - Measures
- Key results
- Conclusions and Recommendations

An example abstract is presented at the end of this document.

TIP: *It's best to write the abstract after completing all other sections of this report. The abstract will likely be the most widely distributed part of the report, so take care that it is complete and concise.*

The abstract should stand alone, providing an overview of the entire Evaluation Report, reasons for the study, major conclusions and recommendations.

Highlight the objective of the intervention or project, e.g., the community norm change anticipated.

IV. Project Description

Briefly describe the project, including the context, the need for the intervention and the purpose of the evaluation. Highlight the objective of the intervention or project, e.g., the community norm change anticipated.

Project Setting: Describe the setting or location of the project (e.g., convenience stores, bars, worksites, schools, etc.). If the setting was the entire community (e.g., the objective was to pass a policy or ordinance) describe the community groups/organizations most directly involved in the project (i.e., city council, PTA, etc.). Provide the contextual and historical background of the project and/or the community. If applicable, include information about population characteristics, economic climate, geography, political climate, and social norms and attitudes around tobacco control.

Project Activities or Methods: Briefly describe activities conducted to achieve the objective, and the reasons for selecting those activities. Were they recommended by peers or by a TCS Health Educator? Did a review of the literature guide your selection? Describe length of project, timing of different activities, and the development and implementation of the intervention. Describe unplanned changes that took place during the intervention, e.g., changes in strategies and project activities.

Target Group: Describe who or what the project was designed to influence or change. Describe the number of stores, organizations, people, events, etc. that received the intervention and rules for inclusion or exclusion, e.g., businesses with a specific type of license and in a certain location.

V. Evaluation Methods

Study Design: Describe the study design (e.g., longitudinal, case study, two-group-delayed treatment, case-control with intact groups) and the reason it was chosen. Describe the number and timing of data collections and the number of groups compared and whether activities varied by group.

Sample Selection and Procedures: Describe how samples (people, activities, documents, and organizations) were selected. Was selection based on position or role of individuals, or based on a scientific method, such as random selection (of groups or group members), systematic sampling (e.g., every 10th patron exiting), or random clusters (e.g., three of nine cities in the county)? Method of sampling determines the extent to which results can be generalized. For example, simple random sampling provides data representative of the target population. Describe the response rate (e.g., how many persons who were approached for an interview completed it?). Include specifics about the items counted. For example, if billboards are being counted, specify that the sample included billboards within 1000 feet of schools. Where applicable, provide demographic characteristics of the sample: breakdowns by ethnic group, gender, and socio-economic status (SES); average age and years of education.

Measures / Evaluation Strategies: Describe the instruments or measurement tools; give details about the main outcome measures. Describe how the tools were developed. Did the evaluator and/or program staff develop the survey (e.g., a key informant interview), use a previously

developed survey, or adapt items from statewide survey instruments such as the California Youth Tobacco Survey? Describe how the data were collected (e.g., mail, phone, interview, observation), and where they were collected (e.g., homes, malls, schools, tobacco retail outlets, specific communities). Describe who collected the data. For example, if advertisements or sales to minors were assessed, who collected that data and exactly how were these things measured?

Be specific in addressing data collection procedures. If in-depth interviews were conducted, were questions about experiences, opinions, feelings, or knowledge asked? Give examples of the types of questions asked and the number and order of questions. For direct observations, describe the physical environment and participants' behavior, informal interactions, and unplanned activities. Who conducted the interviews and did they receive training? Was reliability assessed (e.g., inter-rater reliability)? Describe the length of interviews, observations, etc.

Attach a copy of the measurement tools to this report.

VI. Presentation of Results

Main Results: Findings may be limited to the main outcome variables, and should include descriptive statistics as well as relevant associations and comparisons (e.g., associations between variables of interest or within and between group comparisons). Describe method of analysis and results, for example, theme analysis of open-ended questions, statistical tests of significance, eyeballing the data, or documentation of an event.

If compiling information from multiple sources (e.g., interviews, council meeting minutes, newspaper articles), describe and analyze what you found from each source individually and in combination.

Other Findings: Were there significant associations between the main outcome and other measured variables? Describe any interesting findings not included in main results, for example, younger people changed more than older people, current smokers had a stronger response than non-smokers, and one ethnic group had significantly different concerns about tobacco control than other groups.

Process evaluation provides rich material for a report. Were there any project materials or strategies that were especially effective?

TIP: *Organize data so they are easy to read and highlight key findings. Use selective visual displays of data to demonstrate and dramatize the findings, e.g., listing of main themes or key quotations, figures, bar or line graphs, pie charts.*

Use selective visual displays of data to demonstrate and dramatize the findings.

VII. Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion and Interpretation of Results:

Did the project accomplish the outcome objective? Relate results to the original objective(s) of the program. Did results suggest or demonstrate that intervention activities influenced results? Describe alternative ways the results might be interpreted.

Include worthwhile highlights about the project and its results.

What unanticipated finding did the evaluation reveal? How do the results compare to results from other similar projects (e.g., published literature, or state/federal data)? Were the activities fully implemented as intended?

Conclusions and

Recommendations: Take time to prepare this section of the report. Readers will apply what they learn to their own programs or settings. Share insights useful to others considering similar projects. Provide recommendations for future action on tobacco control at the community level. Describe the challenges/barriers along the way, and recommend changes. Trial and error is an important part of the process. Future projects are tailored according to what worked and what went wrong and why.

Limitations: Briefly summarize the limitations of the study design or execution. Were there any constraints on time or money? Was the intervention too weak (e.g., limited number and length of activities) or the sample size too small to detect the effect of the intervention? Were the measures valid and reliable? Discuss threats to validity and bias (e.g., dropout and sampling bias, socially desirable responses). Were there events and circumstances that might have influenced results more than the intervention activities?

Use and Dissemination of Results: Discuss how results will be used. Do you plan to use them to revise and improve your program, or to present them to a city council, or to use them for public relations or media advocacy, or to formally present or publish your findings?

Example Abstract

Community Policy– Youth Access

This study evaluated the efficacy of enacting community-based policy interventions to reduce youth access to tobacco products. Three cities in a rural county used different methods to ban the self-service display of tobacco products, ranging from a complete ban to various educational and monitoring efforts. The success of each strategy was measured by changes in youth undercover sales rates from 1994 to 1997. Data on illegal sales of tobacco to minors were collected in seven undercover buy operations. Post-intervention analyses showed decreases in illegal sales to minors in all three cities. The only city to enact the self-service display ban permanently dropped its sales rate to zero. The other communities using intensive education and/or enforcement activities experienced lesser drops in youth sales rates; their declines have not been maintained over time. We conclude that community-based advocacy can bring about local policy change, such as the implementation of strong local regulations banning the self-service display of tobacco products. These policies can result in a dramatic and sustained change in underage purchases of tobacco.

This example was adapted from an abstract presented at the first Tobacco Control Project Showcase of local program evaluation during the Project Directors' Meeting in Palm Springs, May 1998.

Evaluation Report Checklist

When you submit your Final Evaluation Report to the State, attach this checklist to the front. Please note “N/A” if an item is not applicable.

- ☐ **I. Title Page**
- ☐ **II. Acknowledgment Page (optional)**
- ☐ **III. Abstract**
- ☐ **IV. Project Description**
 - ☐ Project Setting
 - ☐ Project Activities/Methods
 - ☐ Target Group
- ☐ **V. Evaluation Methods**
 - ☐ Study Design
 - ☐ Sample Selection and Procedures
 - ☐ Measures/Evaluation Strategies
- ☐ **VI. Presentation of Results**
 - ☐ Main Results
 - ☐ Other Findings
- ☐ **VII. Discussion and Recommendations**
 - ☐ Discussion and Interpretation of Results
 - ☐ Conclusions and Recommendations
 - ☐ Limitations
 - ☐ Use and Dissemination of Results
 - ☐ Copy of Measurement Tools Attached.

We have reviewed this report and confirm that it is complete and includes all required items.

Project Director _____

Project Evaluator _____

TELL YOUR STORY: GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING AN EVALUATION REPORT

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